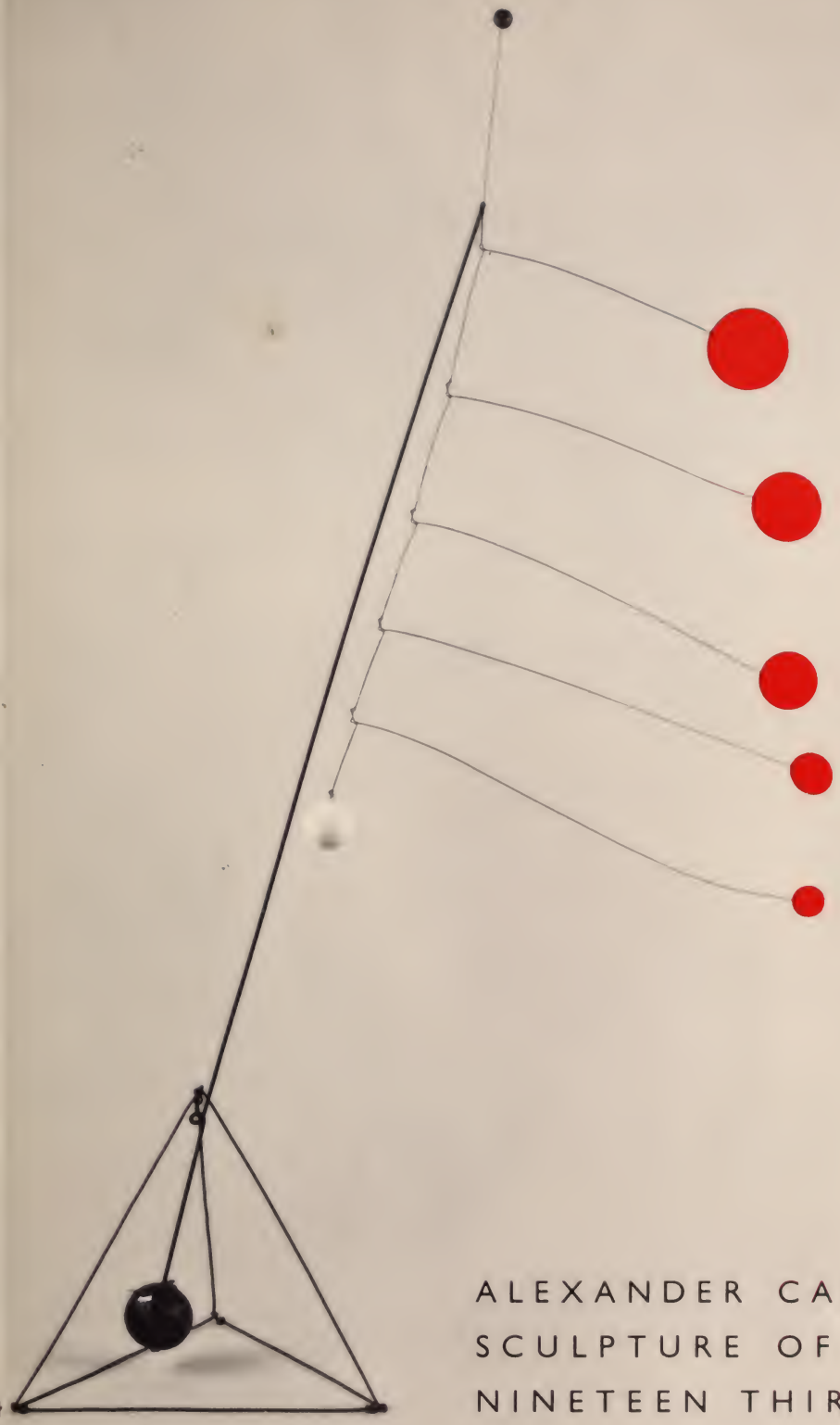


ALEXANDER CALDER
SCULPTURE OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

ALEXANDER CALDER
SCULPTURE OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

George Platt Lynes
ALEXANDER CALDER, 1936
Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie,
New York; Gift of Agnes Rindge Claflin

ALEXANDER CALDER
SCULPTURE OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

Richard Marshall

Whitney Museum of American Art
New York

The 1930s was the most fertile and innovative decade of Calder's fifty-year career. During this period, he made an abrupt shift from figurative sculpture of circus themes to spare and abstract constructions in wood and wire; lived both in Paris and New York, befriending most of the advanced modern artists and architects of the time; was included in over thirty group exhibitions and had one-artist exhibitions in Paris, New York, Berlin, Madrid, Chicago, and London; was the subject of a retrospective exhibition; had two of his works purchased by The Museum of Modern Art, New York; designed stage sets for three theatrical productions; and completed commissioned works for World's Fairs in Paris and New York. Most important, in 1931 Calder introduced a new sculptural form—the mobile—into the vocabulary of modern art. In fact, from this date through the rest of the decade, he introduced a new concept, form, material, or construction into his work almost every year.

This catalogue and the exhibition it accompanies survey the first part of the decade through 1936, when Calder was at his most abstract and exploratory. These years saw the formulation of the aesthetic and the structures that would characterize all of Calder's later works. Although after 1936 he began to refine and smooth his sculpture, to make the mobiles perfectly balanced, to dramatically increase the size and complexity of his objects and constructions, it is in the work of the preceding five years that we can truly see his creative genius in operation.

These same works also reveal the clearest connection with the art Calder had been producing during the late 1920s, when he had been almost totally concerned with circus subjects in both two and three dimensions. *The Brass Family*, 1927, is one of his largest and most confident sculptures. A line drawing in space made of two gauges of brass wire, it displays Calder's virtuoso mastery of this material and his sophisticated sense of balance, proportion, and design—the same qualities that would be revealed in his abstract wire sculpture of the 1930s. Calder first achieved recognition in the 1920s through his performances of the *Circus*, a troupe of miniature figures and animals that he manipulated in a repertory of three-ring circus events. It was through these vaudevillian performances that Calder first met the leading avant-garde artists residing in Paris in 1929 and 1930. Many appreciated the aesthetic aspects of the *Circus*, and they came to his studio for performances—Joan Miró, Man Ray, Jules Pascin, Foujita, Fernand Léger, Jean Arp, Frederick Keisler, and Piet Mondrian. In turn, through this stimulating climate centered in Paris, Calder began to visit other artists' studios and assimilate current aesthetic ideas. As a result, he seems to have grown restless with the *Circus* and begun to undertake more artistically ambitious enterprises.

Calder often recalled his now famous visit to Piet Mondrian's studio in the fall of 1930 as the "shock that started things."

Mondrian lived at 26 rue de Départ. (That building has been demolished since, to make more room for the Gare Montparnasse.) It was a very exciting room. Light came in from the left and from the right, and on the solid wall between the windows there were experimental stunts with colored rectangles of cardboard tacked on. Even the victrola, which had been some muddy color, was painted red.

I suggested to Mondrian that perhaps it would be fun to make these rectangles oscillate. And he, with a very serious countenance, said: "No, it is not necessary, my painting is already very fast."

This visit gave me a shock. A bigger shock, even than eight years earlier, when off Guatemala I saw the beginning of a fiery red sunrise on one side and the moon looking like a silver coin on the other.

This one visit gave me a shock that started things.

Though I had heard the word "modern" before, I did not consciously know or feel the term "abstract." So now, at thirty-two, I wanted to paint and work in the abstract. And for two weeks or so, I painted very modest abstractions. At the end of this, I reverted to plastic work which was still abstract.[1]

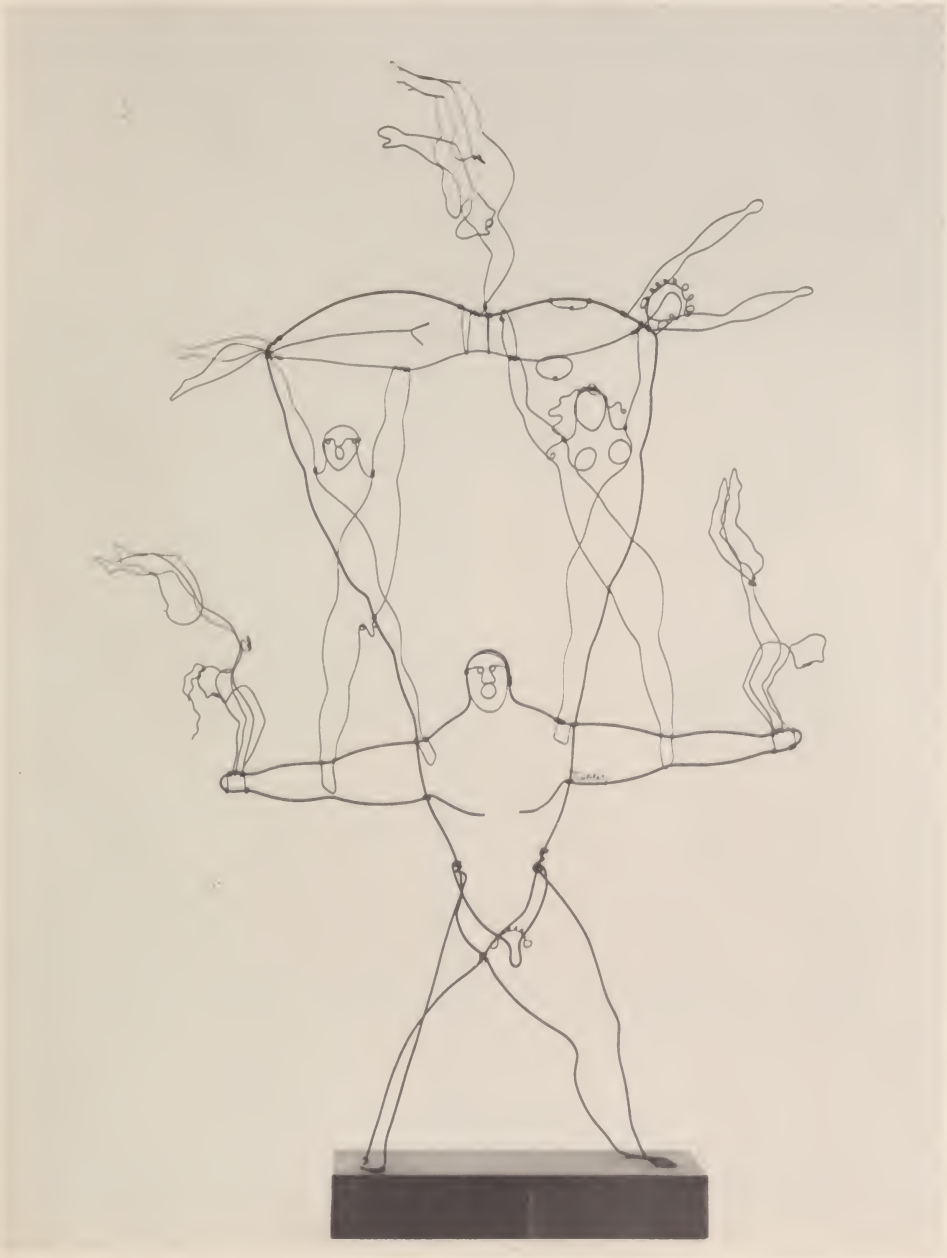
Although it seems inevitable that Calder would have taken up abstraction even if he had not met Mondrian, the visit provided a definite catalyst. And it was, moreover, the overall visual impact of Mondrian's studio, rather than any single painting, which revealed to Calder the direction he should pursue. Returning to his own studio stimulated and inspired, he began to paint "modern" Mondrianesque abstractions such as *Composition* (1930), but he never felt comfortable with oil on canvas. A sculptor, like his father and grandfather, he returned to wire, making objects such as *The Pistil*, 1931 (p. 17). This is one of his earliest and simplest constructions, with the wire forming a shaft, an arc, and a circle, with a brass rod and sphere projecting from the arc. The wooden base, cut from the bleachers used in circus performances, is painted black and white in a Mondrian style.

Universe, 1931 (p. 19), from this same initial series, was exhibited in Calder's 1931 show at the Galerie Percier. This exhibition, like the objects themselves, was severe in its presentation. Although some of Calder's adept wire portraits of friends hung across the top of the room as a concession to potential sales, the rest of the works revealed an austere, serious effort at abstraction. And, indeed, Calder was being serious. He had decided to be an artist—not a performer, illustrator, or toymaker—a modern artist who could and would be considered thoughtfully by his peers. The title of the exhibition

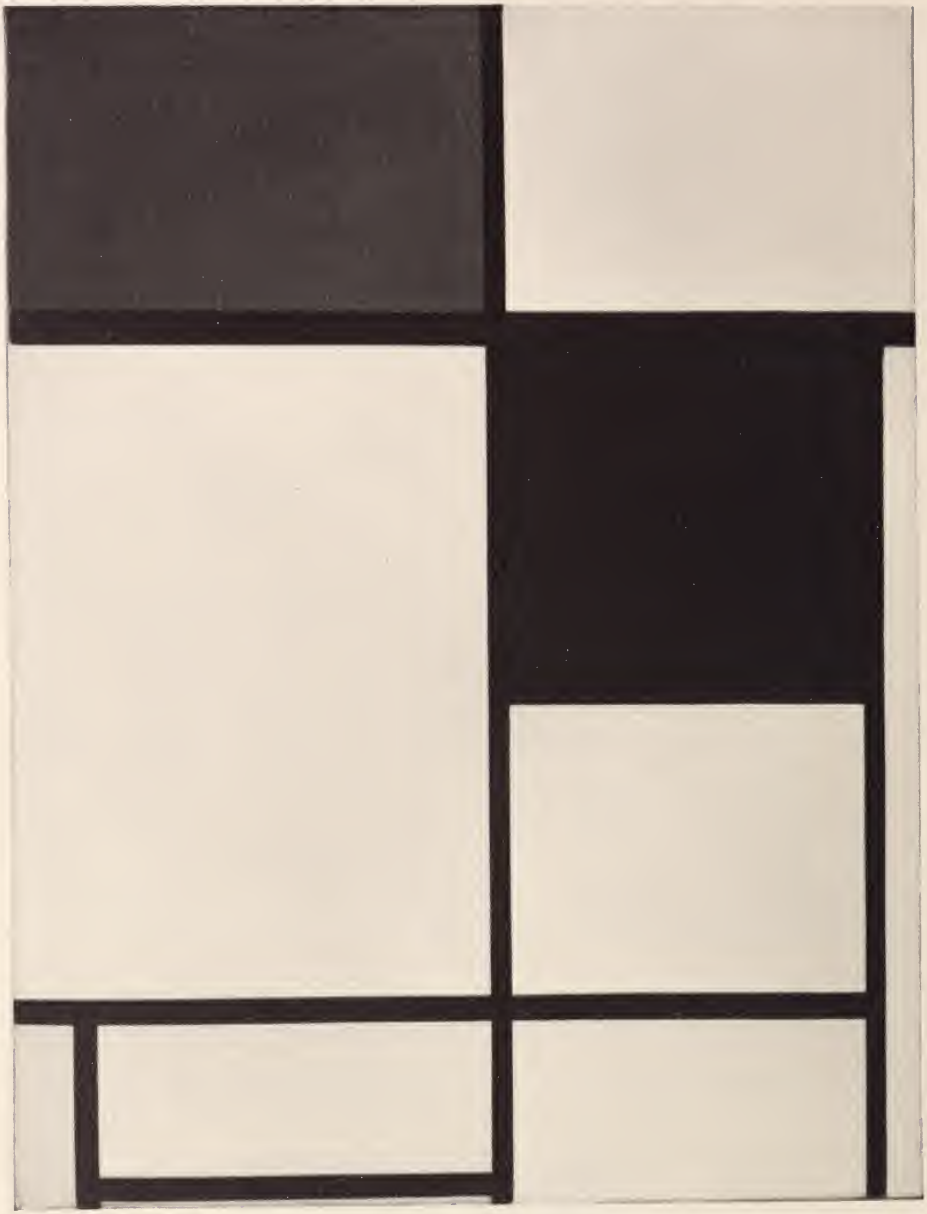
was "Volumes—Vecteurs—Densités," probably terms recalled from Calder's education as an engineer, and he designated the objects as *Sphériques*, *Arcs*, *Densités*, and *Mouvements Arrêtes*. These descriptive and general names suggest Calder's reliance and emphasis on strict Neo-Plastic concerns. He changed the titles later—one of the *Arcs* became *The Pistil*, one of the *Sphériques* became *Universe*—when his need to be completely abstract had lessened, and he began to incorporate Surrealist and biomorphic elements that encouraged associative imagery in his sculpture.

Calder's reference to planetary bodies and outer space in his original titles confirms his interest in the interrelationships of moving objects in set or random orbits and patterns. A few pieces in his Galerie Percier show did have balancing elements, and actual and implied movement had always interested Calder and was an integral component of the *Circus*. His desire to enhance the actual movement in his objects led him to make crank-driven sculptures, such as *Two Spheres Within a Sphere*, c. 1931 (p. 21). These are strongly reminiscent of the scientific models that Calder found fascinating: "A very exciting moment for me was at the planetarium when the machine was run fast for the purpose of explaining its operation: a planet moved along a straight line, then suddenly made a complete loop of 360° off to one side, and then went off in a straight line in its original direction."[2] Following the hand-cranked versions, Calder more successfully achieved this type of celestial movement in the motorized work *A Universe*, 1934 (p. 39). His reliance on motors and pulleys to achieve movement was well founded, since it helped him create abstract objects of changing volumes and directions.

But the motors could only perform a limited number of variations, which became repetitive, and Calder wanted to avoid the look of a contraption that illustrated principles of kinetics. However, motorized objects such as *Dancing Torpedo Shape*, 1932 (p. 31), or *Half-Circle, Quarter-Circle, and Sphere*, 1932 (p. 29), took Calder a step further toward his goal of achieving a "sense of motion in painting and sculpture . . . several motions of different types, speeds and amplitudes composing to make a resultant whole. Just as one can compose colors, or forms, so can one compose motions."[3] His desire was also to make these motions appear to be floating, without support and not subject to gravity: "The orbits are all circular arcs or circles. The supports have been painted to disappear against a white background to leave nothing but the moving elements, their forms and colors, and their orbits, speeds and accelerations."[4] Calder achieved this same effect, either with or without motors, in wall-mounted pieces such as *Construction*, 1932 (p. 33). This work consists of an empty frame, hung away from the wall, from which flat, cut,



Alexander Calder
THE BRASS FAMILY, 1927
Brass wire
64 × 41 × 8½ inches
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Gift of the artist 69.255



Piet Mondrian
COMPOSITION (BLUE, RED, AND YELLOW), 1930
Oil on canvas
28¼ × 21¼ inches
Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

Joan Miró
RELIEF CONSTRUCTION, 1930
Wood and metal
35⅞ × 27⅜ inches
The Museum of Modern Art, New York:
Purchase

painted sheet-metal disks are suspended by wire. This type of construction completely eliminates the background and questions the figure-ground relationship of traditional painting and sculpture. *Construction* recalls the sculptural wall reliefs that both Miró and Arp were doing at the same time but, as with the motorized objects, it reveals Calder's adherence to the strict geometry and logic of Constructivism.

Calder's exploration of free-form movement eventually encouraged him to appropriate the organic and surrealistic modes used by his good friend Miró, as well as to inject his own personalized wit and humor. Objects such as *Feathers* (1931), *Little Ball with Counterweight* (c. 1931), and *Calderberry Bush* (1932) display his gradual adoption of a surreal idiom and his increasingly successful attempts at incorporating actual movement. All three objects also use an open wire pyramid as a base (a device that offered Calder a stable yet immaterial support), a system of weights and counterbalances, a palette limited to red, black, and white, and a method of construction that became characteristic of all Calder's subsequent work. *Little Ball with Counterweight* (p. 23) consists of two pieces—a sheet-metal, tablelike base on which rests a second piece composed of a white ball that holds a red ball on wire, which is counterbalanced by a black metal ball. Although the object does not actually move freely or by air currents, it is one of the first in which Calder allows movement and introduces variation, randomness, and an unfixed positioning.

In *Feathers* (p. 25), a cluster of spheres and counterweights connected with looped wire is balanced by a larger white sphere. This configuration presages Calder's classic mobile construction, but does not yet allow free, random movements. In the construction of *Calderberry Bush*, Calder relied more on his mechanical ingenuity. It was his largest, most complex and ambitious sculpture to date, and surprisingly eloquent and precise, considering that he had only been making these abstract mobile constructions for eighteen months. *Calderberry Bush* (p. 27) is a true mobile, which can be activated manually or by air currents. A black metal rod is balanced diagonally from a hook at the apex of a pyramidal base. The lower end of the rod is weighted by a heavy black sphere counterbalancing a mobile element suspended from the top of the rod that consists of five graduated, red metal disks (or "calderberries"). These are attached to parallel horizontal wires held in alignment by a white wooden sphere. The advanced design and engineering, in addition to the graceful and controlled movement of the disks, justifies the recognition Calder was then receiving as an artist developing an original art form.

Alexander Calder
COMPOSITION, 1930
Oil on canvas
32 × 25½ inches
Private collection

It was around 1932 that Calder began to combine and balance the strict geometric abstraction of Mondrian with the biomorphic Surrealism of Miró—and emerge with his own style. He developed the mobile and its variants more fully during the next few years, as seen in *Mobile*, c. 1934 (p. 35), and *The Circle*, 1935 (p. 37). He also experimented with different ways to suspend objects, using different bases and supports, always seeking the greatest variation in movement and combinations of forms. Like the 1932 *Construction*, these pieces eliminate any background reference and explore ways to animate space and forms. They also display Calder's interest in incorporating found objects, such as bones, spools, and ceramics, while still maintaining a restricted color range. At this time, Calder was still using generic, descriptive titles to emphasize the abstract quality of the works and to thwart any associative content. *Calderberry Bush*, for instance, was exhibited in 1934 and 1935 as *Object with Red Disks*. Calder gave it the more humorous and self-referential title at a later date.

Although the ceiling-hung mobile was to become a Calder trademark by the 1950s, those of the early thirties are rudimentary and small. Composing with suspended forms seems to have engaged Calder most intensely when the support was anchored down, so that most of the early 1930s mobiles are floor- and pedestal-based. Around 1935–36 he began to concentrate more attention on the novel, ceiling-hung device. In *Mobile* (c. 1935), he employed a system of balanced and staggered horizontal bars from which hung variously sized, colored, and weighted objects. At this time, mobiles such as *Black Clouds*, 1936 (p. 47), grew dramatically in scale and complexity, combining and balancing graduated spheres against ominous, biomorphic shapes cut from sheet metal.

Just as Calder first used the familiar medium of wire to form his earliest abstractions, he returned to wood in the mid-1930s, a material he had frequently worked with in the late 1920s. Whereas he would formerly fashion a horse, figure, or cat from a found log, fence post, or other piece of wood, he now combined found and carved wood forms into powerful abstract constructions. *Wood Mobile*, 1935 (p. 41), and *Gibraltar*, 1936 (p. 43), reveal Calder's sensitivity to the texture of wood and his ability to combine weighty, dense forms with delicate organic shapes. These sculptures are primarily stationary, although certain elements vibrate or are movable. They foreshadow the "classic" stabile that he would develop more fully in the 1940s. *Gibraltar* is an imposing object whose suggestive title and reference to a surreal landscape mark Calder's further move away from formal, Constructivist concerns and geometric rigidity, and toward a more fluid and

surreal abstraction. *The Praying Mantis* (p. 49), completed in 1936, even more obviously underlines Calder's adoption of a surreal, associative idiom. One of Calder's largest and most complex pieces to that date, it was included in the important exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in that year. It not only assimilates the results of his sculptural experiments, but also announces the emergence of a more confident and ambitious artist.

Calder's work of the early thirties was exploratory, rough, and young. He was searching for himself and for his sculptural strength, and he wavered between aesthetic and philosophical camps, borrowing from each. By the later 1930s, he seems to have successfully joined organic abstraction with Constructivist discipline and made the motion in his art natural rather than theoretical. His work then became larger and more complex in configuration and construction. And he began to enjoy an increased sense of confidence when, in the latter part of the decade, his art was included in important international exhibitions and acquired by museums, and he received commissions from dance companies and for world's fairs and other site-specific locations. But it was the innovative period of the early 1930s that gave rise to the vocabulary of forms, colors, and movements that would occupy Calder for the next forty years.

Richard Marshall
Associate Curator, Exhibitions

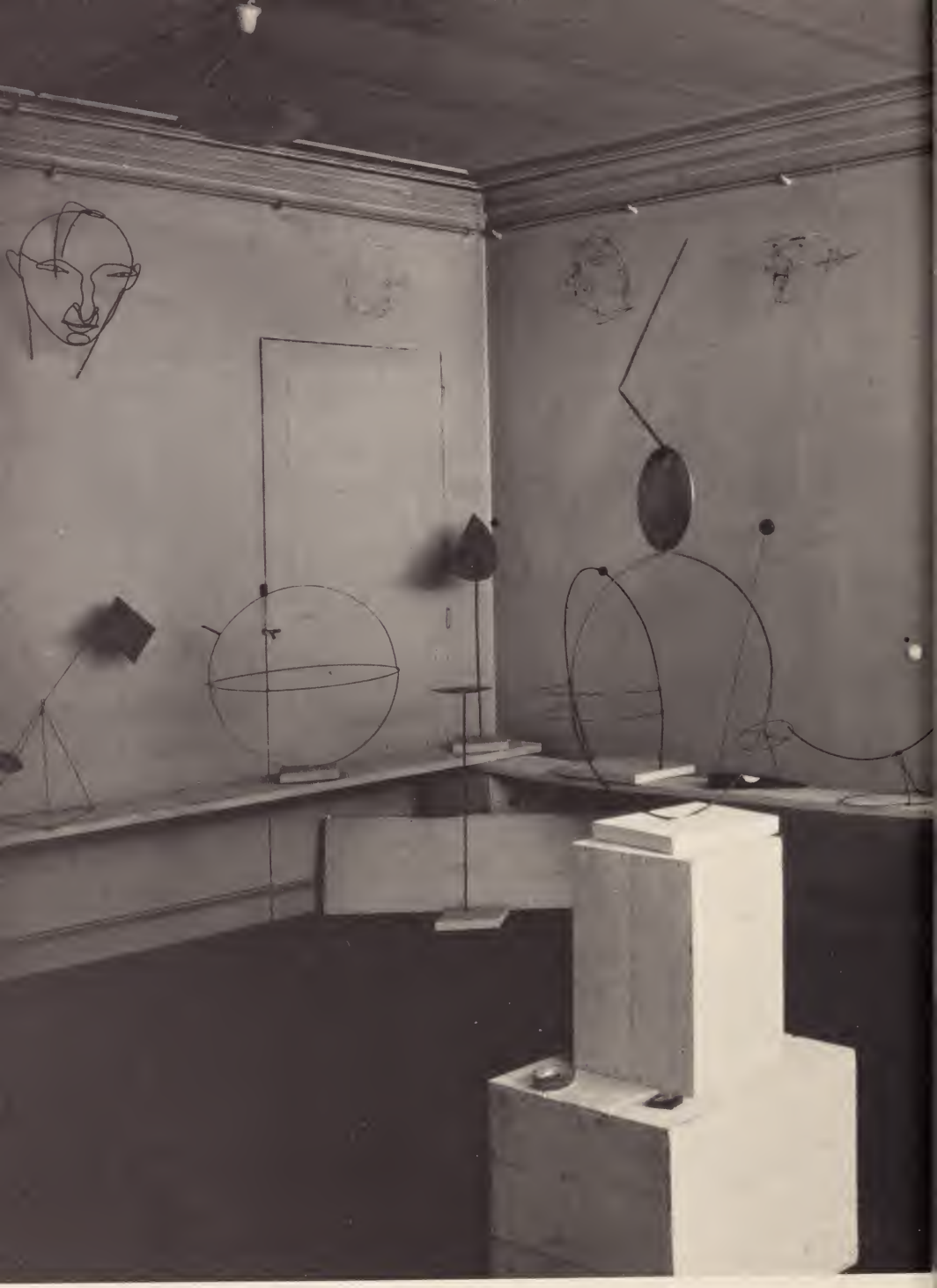
Notes

1. *Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures*, foreword by Robert Osborn and introduction by Jean Davidson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), p. 113.

2. Alexander Calder, "What Abstract Art Means to Me," *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, 18 (Spring 1951), p. 8.

3. Quoted in H. Harvard Arnason, Alexander Calder, and Ugo Mulas, *Calder* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 29.

4. Ibid.



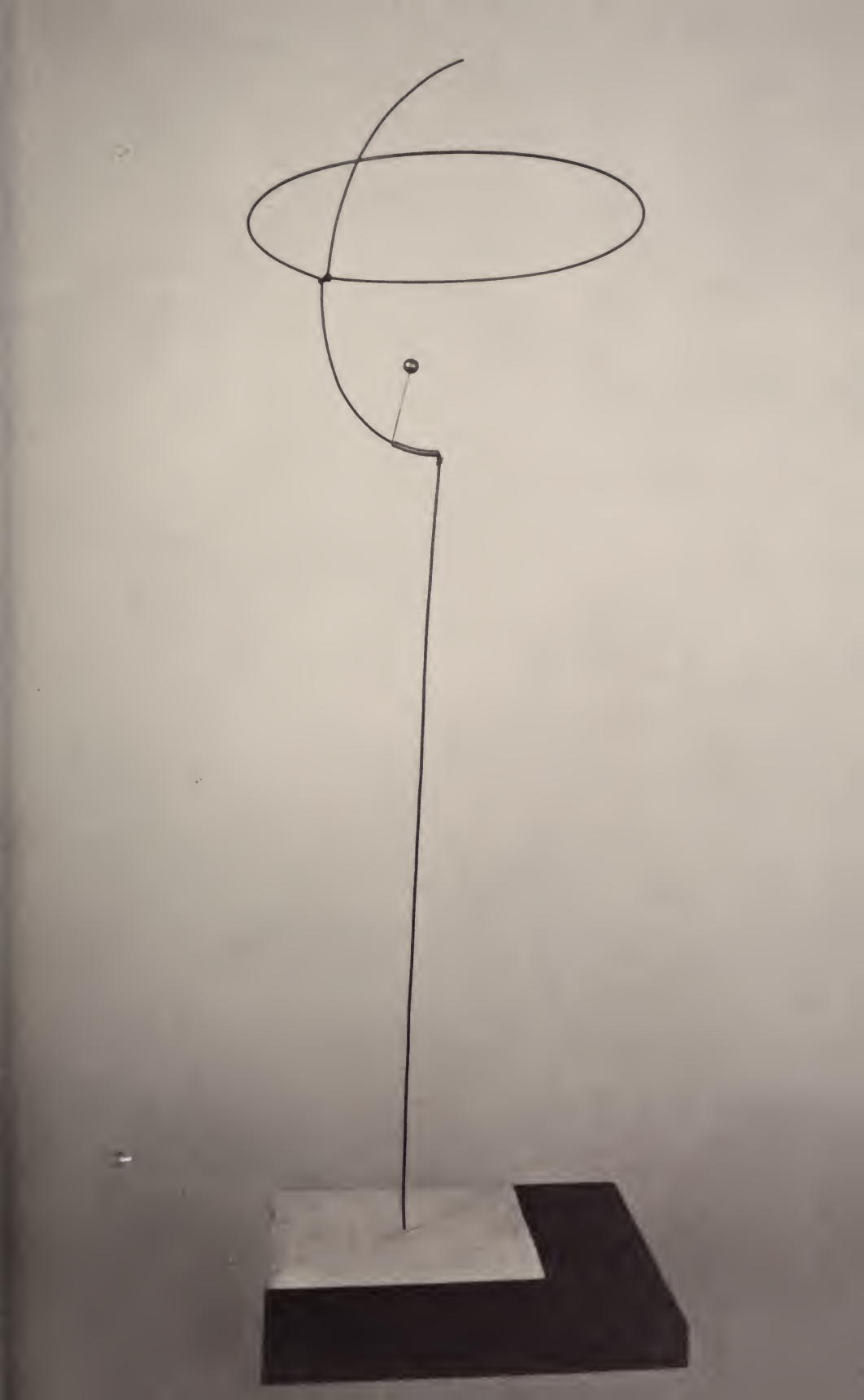
"Alexander Calder," Galerie Percier, Paris, 1931

THE PISTIL, 1931

Wire, brass, and painted wood

40 × 12¾ × 12¾ inches

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Purchase, with funds from the Howard and
Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 70.12



UNIVERSE, 1931

Painted steel rod, wire, and wood

37 × 23 × 23 inches

Estate of Alexander Calder, courtesy

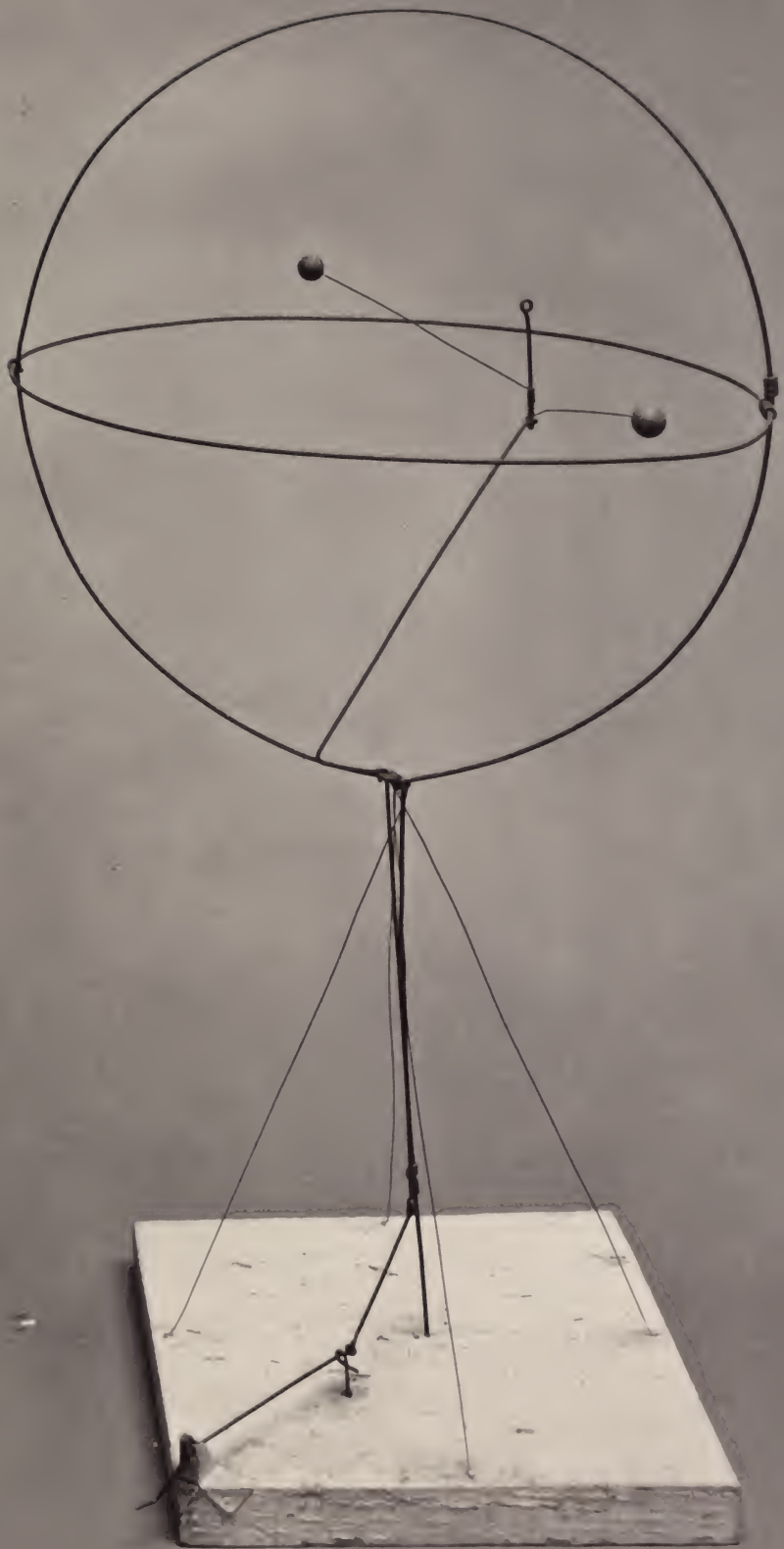
The Pace Gallery, New York

TWO SPHERES WITHIN A SPHERE, c. 1931

Wire and painted wood

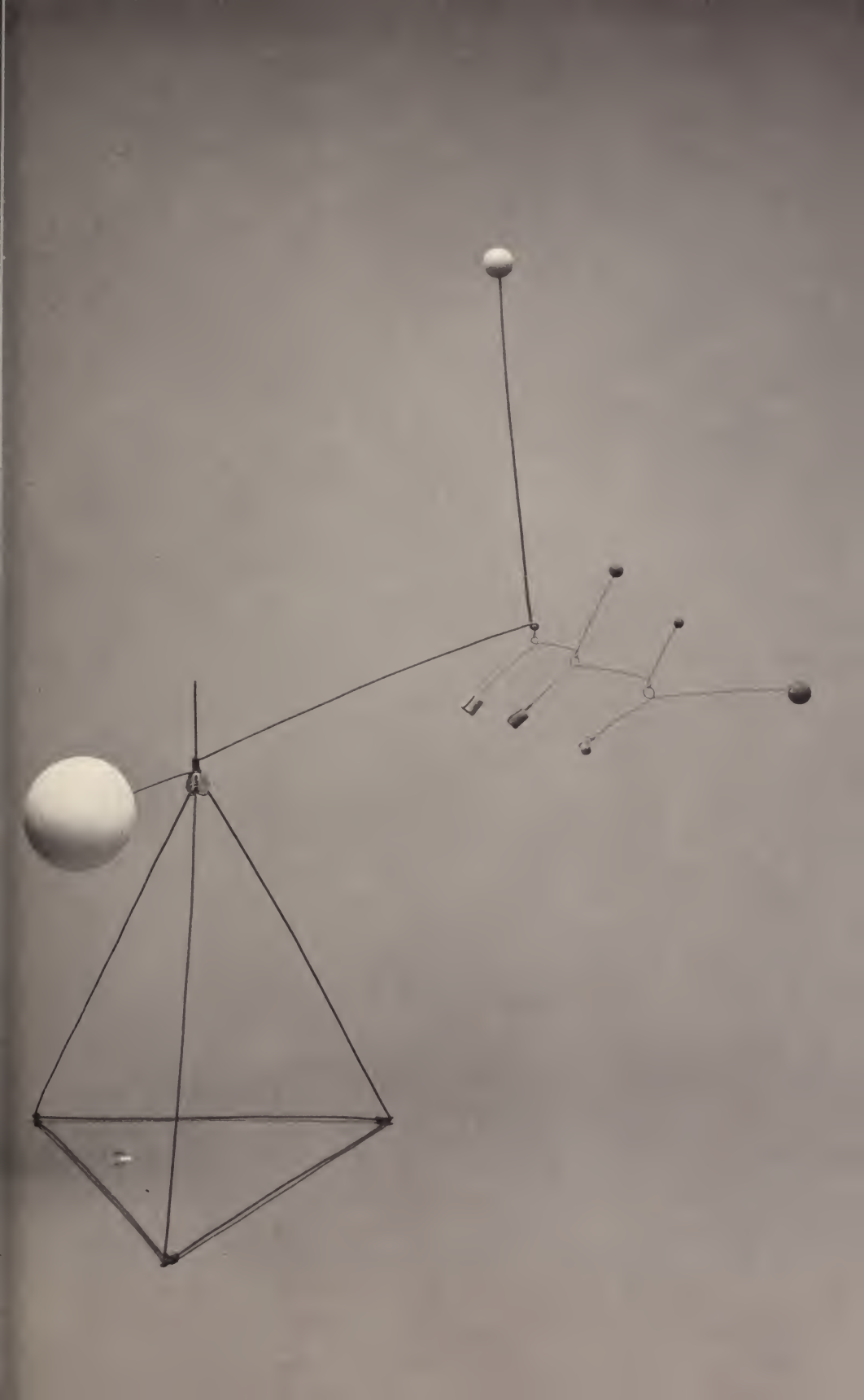
37½ × 32 × 14 inches

Private collection



LITTLE BALL WITH COUNTERWEIGHT,
c. 1931
Painted sheet metal, wire, and wood
63¾ × 12½ × 12½ inches
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Promised 50th Anniversary Gift of Mr. and
Mrs. Leonard J. Horwich P.9.79

FEATHERS, 1931
Painted wire, wood, and lead weights
38½ × 32 × 16 inches
Private collection



CALDERBERRY BUSH, 1932

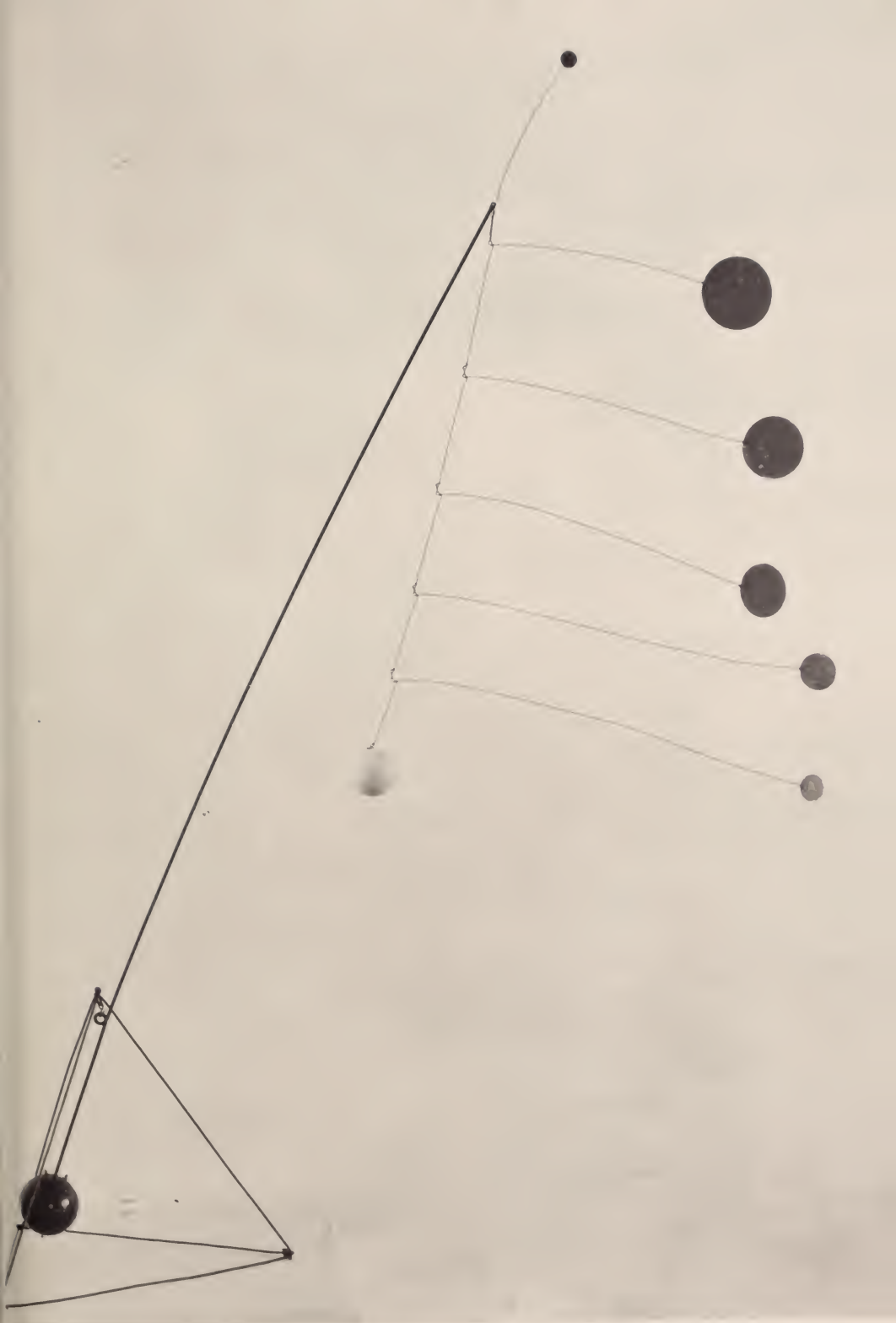
Painted steel rod, wire, wood, and sheet aluminum

88½ × 33 × 47½ inches

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;

Purchase, with funds from the Mrs. Percy Uris

Purchase Fund 86.49



HALF-CIRCLE, QUARTER-CIRCLE,
AND SPHERE, 1932

Painted steel rod, wire, sheet metal, wood, and motor
78¼ × 24 × 13¾ inches
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Purchase, with funds from the Howard and
Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 69.258

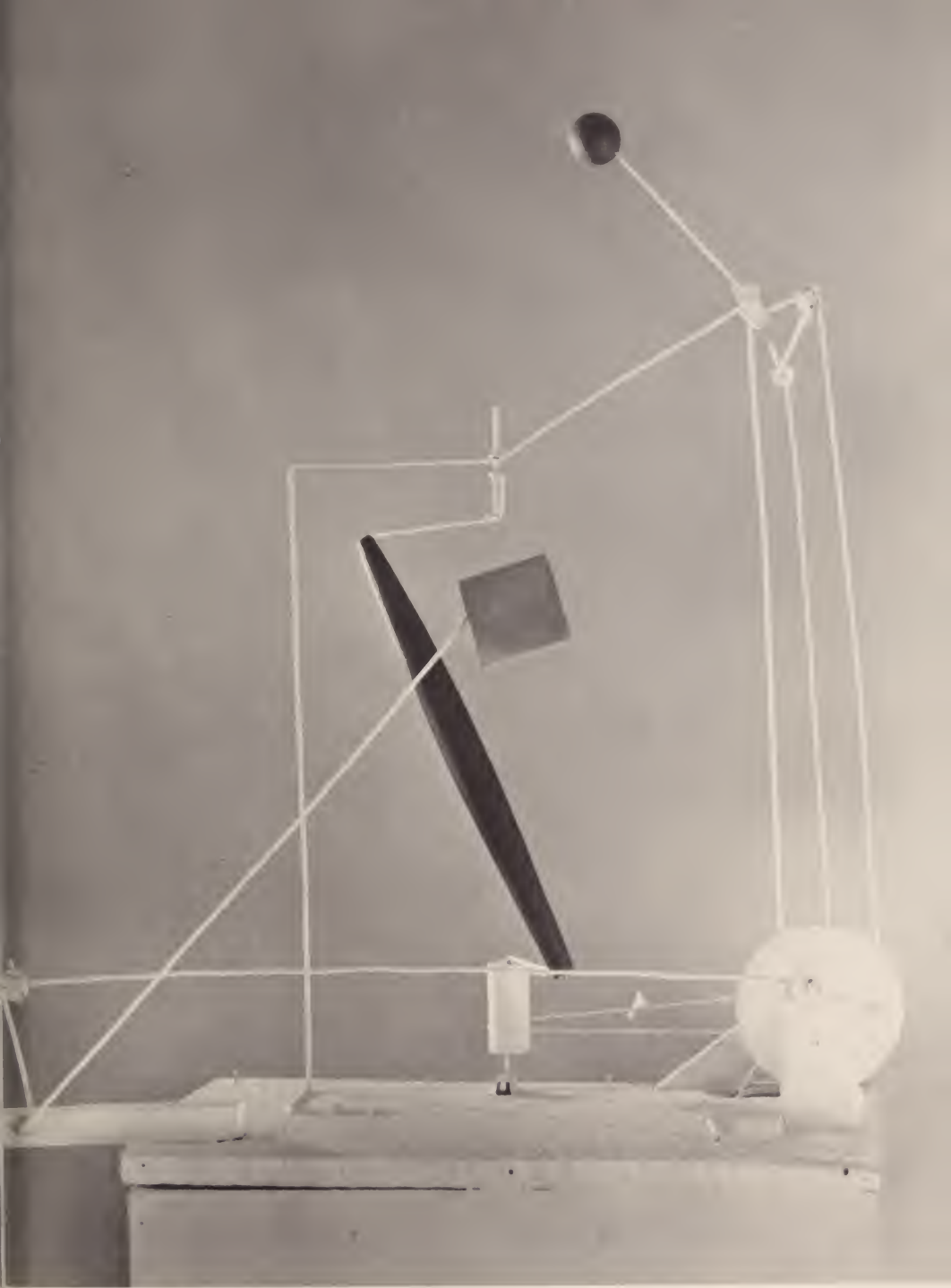
DANCING TORPEDO SHAPE, 1932

Painted wood, wire, sheet aluminum, and motor

26¼ × 24¾ × 10½ inches

The Berkshire Museum,

Pittsfield, Massachusetts



CONSTRUCTION, 1932

Painted sheet metal, wood, and wire

30¼ × 35 × 26½ inches

Philadelphia Museum of Art: A.E. Gallatin Collection

MOBILE, c. 1934

Steel rod, wire, and nickel-plated wood

42½ × 11⅞ × 20 inches

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton,
Massachusetts; Purchased, Director's Fund

THE CIRCLE, 1935

Painted steel rod, wire, sheet metal, wood,
ceramic, and string
35⅞ × 31⅜ × 31⅜ inches
Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie,
New York; Gift of Agnes Rindge Claflin

A UNIVERSE, 1934

Painted metal, wire, wood, string, and motor

40½ × 31 × 29 inches

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (by exchange)

WOOD MOBILE, 1935

Wood and wire

39⅜ × 23½ × 7⅞ inches

Collection of Ralph and Helyn Goldenberg

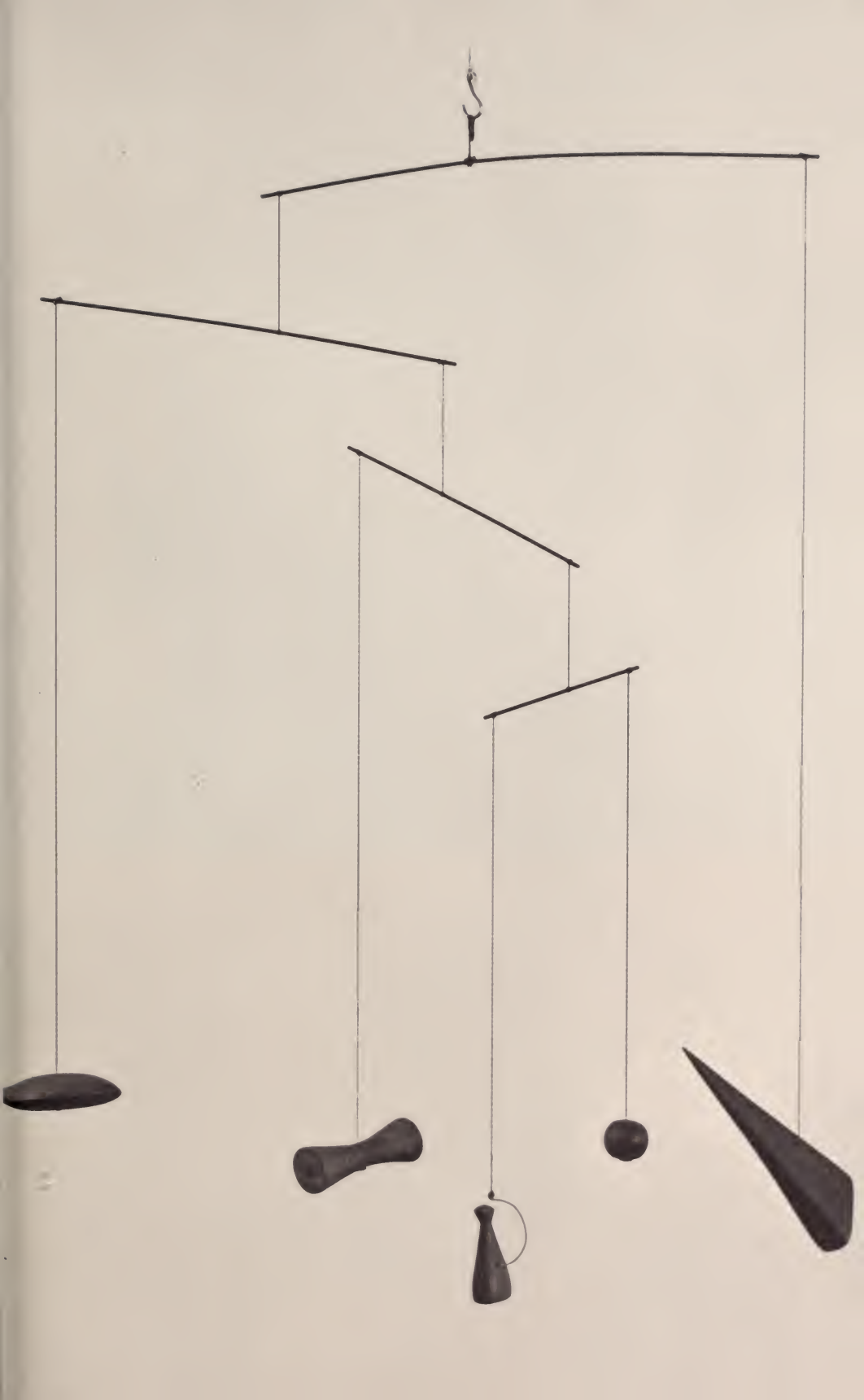
GIBRALTAR, 1936
Lignum vitae, walnut, steel rods,
and painted wood
51⅞ × 24¼ × 11⅜ inches
The Museum of Modern Art, New York;
Gift of the artist

MOBILE, c. 1936

Painted sheet metal, wood, wire, and string

67 × 65 inches

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York; Mary Reynolds Collection,
Gift of her brother



BLACK CLOUDS, 1936

Painted steel rod, sheet metal, wire, wood, and string

72½ × 97½ inches

Collection of Andrea Bollt

THE PRAYING MANTIS, 1936
Painted iron rod, wood, wire, and string
78 × 51 × 40 inches
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut;
Gift of Henry and Walter Keney

Chronology 1929–1939

1929

First one-artist exhibition in Paris at the Galerie Billiet (January 25–February 7). The exhibition includes wire portraits and carved wood figures and has a small brochure with a preface by Jules Pascin.

Gives frequent performances of his circus figures in his studio at 7 rue Cels and first meets Joan Miró, Foujita, and Man Ray.

An exhibition of wood sculpture is held at the Weyhe Gallery, New York (February).

Exhibition of wire portraits, wood figures, and circus performances at Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf, Berlin (April).

Returns to New York in June and meets his future wife, Louisa Cushing James, a grandniece of William and Henry James.

Works in the 14th Street studio of his father, the sculptor Alexander Stirling Calder.

Exhibition of wood and wire figures and animals at the Fifty-sixth Street Gallery, New York (December 2–14).

1930

Exhibits wood and wire sculpture at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, Cambridge (January 27–February 4) and gives circus performances for Harvard students.

Sails for Europe in March. Arrives in Malaga, visits Barcelona, and then returns to Paris, where he takes a studio at 7 Villa Brune.

Louisa James visits Paris during the summer, and she and Calder continue their courtship.

Gives frequent circus performances in his Paris studio to a growing audience that includes Jean Cocteau, Jules Pascin, Foujita, Man Ray, Robert Desnos, and Edgar Varèse. Through Varèse, Calder meets Frederick Kiesler, who brings Fernand Léger, Le Corbusier, Theo van Doesburg, and Piet Mondrian to circus performances.

William Einstein, an American abstract painter and neighbor of Calder, arranges for Calder to visit Mondrian's studio at 26 rue de Départ. Calder is profoundly affected by the visit and immediately begins to experiment with abstraction, first in painting and then in sculpture.

After several members of the Abstraction-Création group visit his Villa Brune studio, Calder becomes one of the few Americans invited to join this newly founded group of nonrepresentational artists. Members also included William Einstein, Jean Arp, Piet Mondrian, Robert Delaunay, Antoine Pevsner, and Jean Hélion.

Calder returns to New York in December and lives with a friend, Paul Nitze, on East 40th Street.

Work included in a group exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, "Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans" (December 2, 1930–January 20, 1931).

1931

Marries Louisa James on January 17 in Concord, Massachusetts. They live for a while in New York City, where Calder gives frequent circus performances, then return to the Paris studio at 7 Villa Brune.

With the help of colleagues in Abstraction-Création, Calder's first exhibition of abstract constructions is held at the Galerie Percier (April 27–May 9). "Alexandre Calder: Volumes—Vecteurs—Densités—Dessins—Portraits" is accompanied by a small catalogue with a preface by Fernand Léger. Included are *The Pistil* (1931) and *Universe* (1931).

Makes the final figures for the *Circus* and begins a series of large pen-and-ink circus drawings and a series of abstract "space" drawings. Does fifty illustrations for the *Fables of Aesop*, published by Harrison of Paris.

In May, rents a three-story house and studio at 14 rue de la Colonie, near the Place d'Italie; summer in Mallorca and Brittany.
Winter, begins making abstract sculpture with moving parts operated by hand cranks or electric motors.

1932

Mary Reynolds, an early collector of Calder's work, brings Marcel Duchamp to Calder's rue de la Colonie studio. Duchamp is impressed by Calder's motor-driven objects and helps arrange an exhibition at the Galerie Vignon of approximately fifteen objects with motors and fifteen without (February 17–29). Duchamp suggests the design for the invitation and a name for the motor-driven sculpture—"mobile." In response, Arp suggests "stabile" for the stationary sculptures that Calder exhibited in 1931.
The Calders return to New York in May. Exhibition of motorized and crank-driven mobiles at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York (May 12–June 11).
August, sails to Europe; disembarks at Barcelona and visits Joan Miró and his wife on their farm in nearby Montroig.
September, returns to Paris home and studio at rue de la Colonie. Tiring of the predictable, repetitive quality of motorized movement, begins working on air-driven mobiles.

1933

Miró arranges for two exhibitions of circus objects, drawings, and performances in Madrid and Barcelona (January).
During the spring, included in a group exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris, with Arp, Hélion, Miró, Pevsner, and Kurt Seligmann. During this exhibition, first meets New York art dealer Pierre Matisse and American critic and curator James Johnson Sweeney, who was to become the leading proponent of Calder's work.
One-artist exhibition in Paris at the Galerie Pierre Colle (May).
Concerned about political tensions in Europe, the Calders return to New York in June. In July, they purchase an old farmhouse on Painter Hill Road in Roxbury, Connecticut, and Calder sets up a new studio.
August, exhibition at The Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The museum purchases two motorized works, *Dancing Torpedo Shape* (1932) and *The Arc and the Quadrant* (1932).

1934

First exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (April 6–28), contains mostly air-driven mobiles made in the Roxbury studio. James Johnson Sweeney writes the preface to the exhibition catalogue and, in return, Calder offers him a gift of a sculpture. Sweeney chooses, and gives Calder a modest payment for, the work later entitled *Calderberry Bush*, made in Paris in 1932.
In the spring, participates in an exhibition sponsored by New York City from which a mobile is purchased by Alfred H. Barr for The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and later exchanged for a motorized sculpture, *A Universe* (1934).
Makes a number of "frames" (motorized elements set in open wood frames), the largest, *White Frame* (1934), measuring 7½ by 9 feet. In addition, Calder's new Connecticut location allows him to experiment with larger pieces and outdoor works such as *Steel Fish* (1934).
Calder is the only American included in "A Selection of Works by Twentieth-Century Artists" at the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago (June 20–August 20). *Calderberry Bush* is reproduced on the catalogue cover as *Object with Red Disks*.
The Calders spend the summer in Roxbury and winter in New York—a practice they would continue for many years. Each year Calder rents small neighborhood storefronts to use as studios.

1935

"Mobiles," an exhibition of Calder's abstract work, is held at the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago (January 14–31). The same works are then shown at the Arts Club of Chicago (February 1–26). The catalogue cover reproduces *Calderberry Bush* (exhibited as *Object with Red Disks*) and contains an introduction by James Johnson Sweeney. Also exhibited are *Red Frame*, *Objects in Circle*, *Feathers*, and *Rotating Disks*.

Completes his first outdoor commission—a standing mobile for the garden of a private collector in Rochester, New York. The piece is constructed of welded steel rods forming a pyramidal base from which are suspended mobile elements.

Work included in the group exhibition "Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse" at the Kunstmuseum, Lucerne, Switzerland (February–March).

The Calders' first daughter, Sandra, born on April 20.

Calder designs mobile sets for Martha Graham's ballet *Panorama*, performed at the Bennington School of Dance, Vermont, in August.

1936

Designs his second mobile stage set, for Martha Graham's New York production of *Horizons* (February–March). Also designs an elaborate stage set of moving panels and disks for Erik Satie's symphonic drama *Socrate*, performed at the First Hartford Music Festival, held at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.

Second one-artist exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (February 10–29); also exhibits work at the Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibits Calder's work in three different group exhibitions: "Cubism and Abstract Art" (April), "Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators" (April–September), and "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" (December 1936–January 1937), which includes *The Praying Mantis* (1936).

1937

Makes his first large stabile, *Whale*, of bolted planes of sheet metal painted black and resting on a wooden log.

One-artist exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (February 23–March 13).

"Fantastic Art: Miró and Calder" is held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts (May–June), which acquires for the collection *Object with Yellow Background* (1936).

May, the Calders return to Paris for the first time since 1933. They reside in a house designed by Paul Nelson and through him meet José Luis Sert and Louis Lacasa, designers of the Spanish Pavilion for the Paris World's Fair. They invite Calder to design a fountain that will display mercury taken from the mines of Almadén. Calder's *Mercury Fountain* is installed near Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) in the Spanish Pavilion and is one of the most popular attractions at the fair.

Summer, rents a house in Varengeville, Normandy, where Nelson, Sert, Miró, Braque, and others also vacation. Winter in London, where he has an exhibition of mobiles and stabiles at the Freddy Mayor Gallery (December).

1938

Returns to Roxbury in the spring; continues to spend winters in New York. Builds a large new studio adjoining the Roxbury house.

The first large retrospective survey of Calder's work is held at the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, Springfield, Massachusetts (November 8–27). Exhibition includes sixty-seven mobiles, stabiles, wood and wire sculptures of figures, animals, and circus subjects, and drawings and watercolors. James Johnson Sweeney writes the catalogue foreword.

1939

Designs a "water ballet" fountain for the Consolidated Edison pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The planned five-minute program of revolving 40-foot jets of water punctuated with isolated spurts and splashes does not perform properly because of faulty installation. Also on display in the World's Fair Hall of Industrial Science is Calder's first and only sculpture in Plexiglas, which wins first prize in a competition sponsored by the plastics manufacturers Röhm & Haas.
One-artist exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (May 9–27).
The Calders' second daughter, Mary, born May 25.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, commissions a hanging mobile for the stairwell of its new building on West 53rd Street; Calder makes his largest and most complex mobile to date, *Lobster Trap and Fish Tail*.

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Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches, followed by centimeters; height precedes width precedes depth.

FEATHERS, 1931
Painted wire, wood, and lead weights
38½ × 32 × 16 (97.8 × 81.3 × 40.6)
Private collection

THE PISTIL, 1931
Wire, brass, and painted wood
40 × 12¾ × 12¾ (101.6 × 32.4 × 32.4)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 70.12

UNIVERSE, 1931
Painted steel rod, wire, and wood
37 × 23 × 23 (94 × 58 × 58)
Estate of Alexander Calder, courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York

LITTLE BALL WITH COUNTERWEIGHT, c. 1931
Painted sheet metal, wire, and wood
63¾ × 12½ × 12½ (161.9 × 31.8 × 31.8)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Promised 50th Anniversary Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Horwich P.9.79

TWO SPHERES WITHIN A SPHERE, c. 1931
Wire and painted wood
37½ × 32 × 14 (95.3 × 81.3 × 35.6)
Private collection

CALDERBERRY BUSH, 1932
Painted steel rod, wire, wood, and sheet aluminum
88½ × 33 × 47½ (224.8 × 83.8 × 120.7)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund 86.49

CONSTRUCTION, 1932
Painted sheet metal, wood, and wire
30¼ × 35 × 26½ (76.8 × 88.9 × 67.3)
Philadelphia Museum of Art; A.E. Gallatin Collection

HALF-CIRCLE, QUARTER-CIRCLE, AND SPHERE, 1932
Painted steel rod, wire, sheet metal, wood, and motor
78¼ × 24 × 13¾ (198.8 × 60.7 × 34.9)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 69.258

MOBILE, c. 1934
Steel rod, wire, and nickel-plated wood
42½ × 11⅞ × 20 (108 × 30.2 × 50.8)
Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts; Purchased, Director's Fund

THE CIRCLE, 1935
Painted steel rod, wire, sheet metal, wood, ceramic, and string
35⅞ × 31⅜ × 31⅜ (91.1 × 79.7 × 79.7)
Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York; Gift of Agnes Rindge Claflin

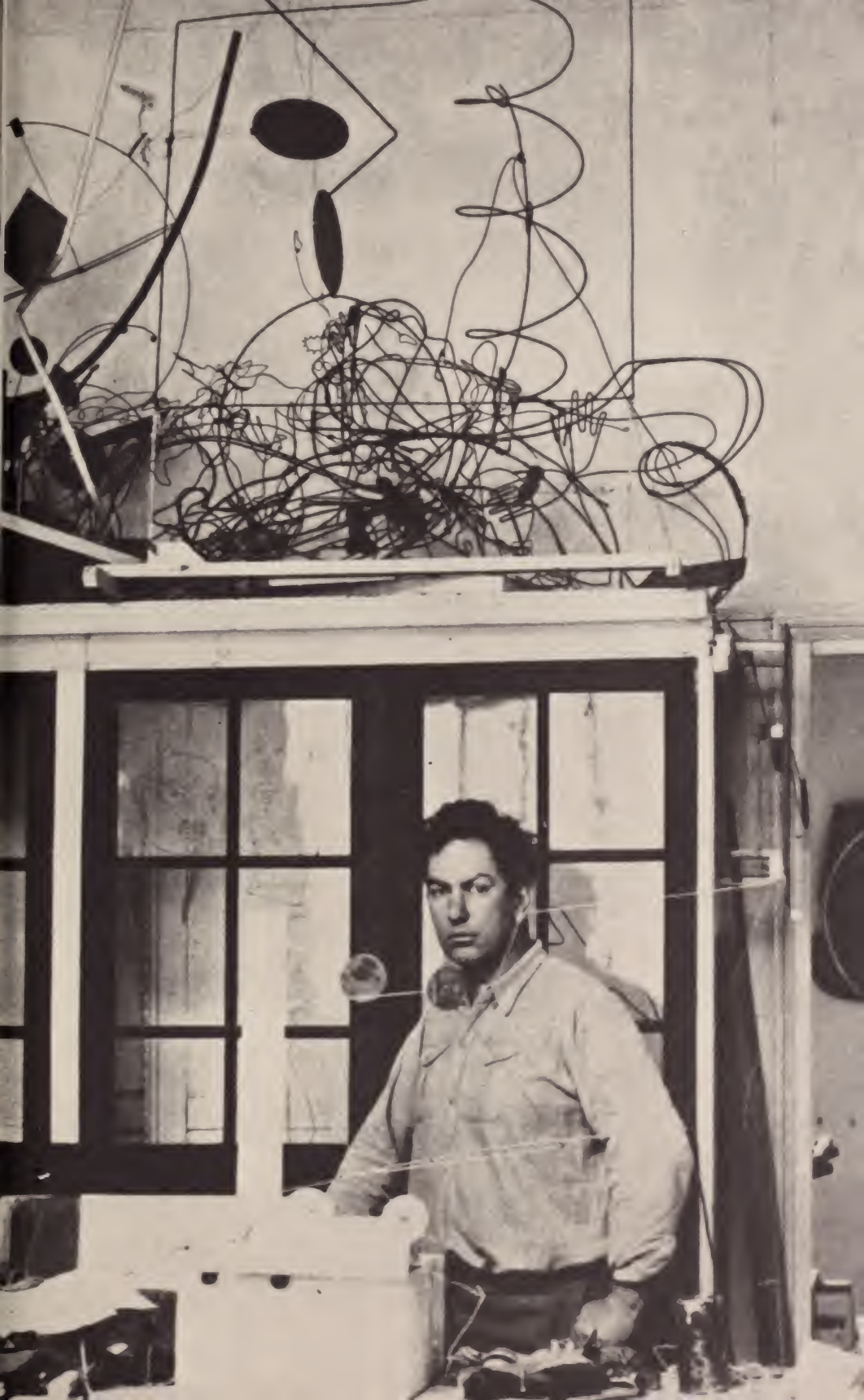
WOOD MOBILE, 1935
Wood and wire
39⅜ × 23½ × 7⅞ (100 × 59.7 × 20)
Collection of Ralph and Helyn Goldenberg

MOBILE, c. 1935
Painted wood, wire, and string
65 × 75 (165.1 × 190.5)
Collection of Norman and Irma Braman

BLACK CLOUDS, 1936
Painted steel rod, sheet metal, wire, wood, and string
72½ × 97½ (184.2 × 247.7)
Collection of Andrea Bollt

GIBRALTAR, 1936
Lignum vitae, walnut, steel rods, and painted wood
51⅞ × 24¼ × 11⅜ (131.7 × 61.3 × 28.7)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gift of the artist

Alexander Calder in his studio, 14 rue de la Colonie, Paris, 1932



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